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Introduction

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) issued *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* in serial publication after he published *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in 1891, and then rewrote and brought it out as *The Well-Beloved, a Sketch of Temperament* in 1897. In both novels the story is set on an imaginary island, the Isle of Slingers. Jocelyn Pierston the hero is born in the isle, and loves three generations of Avices and spends his advanced age there. Three Avices as the heroines associate with him in their own ways throughout the lineage.

The Well-Beloved has been regarded as one of his "minor" novels, or a mere intermediate work between *Tess* and *Jude* (Duffin 58), and taken as a fantasy or anti-realistic novel. It deals with love and marriage of four female and one male characters. The novel is constructed around experience and artistic sense of a sculptor Jocelyn Pierston, on whom the author's real self is reflected. As for the characteristics of the hero of *The Well-Beloved*, Millgate as well as Taylor points out some similarities between Hardy and Jocelyn (Millgate 299-307 and Taylor 160-64). Miller analyzes the language and form of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Well-Beloved* (Miller, *Fiction and Repetition* Chapter 5-6), exploring "geometric artifice" in *The Well-Beloved* and their covert rejection of the ideology of humanist-realism in his "Introduction" to the novel (13-16). Pykett in "Ruinous Bodies" suggests that all *Tess*, *Jude* and *The Well-Beloved* share the theme of sexuality in the late 19th century (Pykett 158, 165). However, there are still few studies on female characterization in *The Well-Beloved* by the male author.

This study examines the change in Jocelyn Pierston's idealization—named "pursuit of the Well-Beloved"—of the four women. Idealized female characters are gradually transformed into flesh-and-blood women every twenty years. At the end of the novel, he abandons not only his "pursuit of the Well-Beloved" but also his idealization of women; the man of sixty learns to view females with a clear eye.

This study is a revaluation of *The Well-Beloved* as a realist novel, whose female characters reflect the Victorian view of females and the circumstances under which they were subjected, especially from 1850s to 1890s. Chapter 1 of this study begins by outlining the work, paying special attention to the custom of premarital intercourse which provides the narrative framework. Chapters 2-4 analyse the representation of the characters as the story develops every twenty years. In his last novel of the imaginary Isle of Slingers, Hardy delineates the process with which Jocelyn learns, stage by stage, to deal with the other sex through relationship with four women—three Avices spreading over three generations and Marcia.

1. The Background of *The Well-Beloved*

The main story of *The Well-Beloved* develops around the relationships between three Avices and Jocelyn in the imaginary Isle of Slingers. Avice the First is Jocelyn's once bride-to-be in his twenties, Avice the Second named Ann Avice whom Jocelyn encounters in his forties is a daughter of Avice the First, and Avice the Third whom Jocelyn encounters in his sixties is a granddaughter of Avice the First. Jocelyn sees an Avice every twenty years on the course of his "pursuit of the Well-Beloved." The "Well-Beloved" he calls his lover has enchanted Jocelyn from his early years to his end of an artistic life. He has been haunted with the image of Avice the First, for Jocelyn and the first Avice were once lovers but separated because of the marriage tradition in the island. His regret for the past lingers on at the bottom of his mind until he gives up "pursuit of the Well-Beloved." In his twenties and sixties, he associates with Marcia Bencomb, whom he finally marries.

The Isle of Slingers, or the ancient Vindilia Island, corresponds in the real world to the peninsula of Portland in Dorset. The Preface of *The Well-Beloved* in 1912 says:

> The peninsula carved by Time out of a single stone, whereon most of the following scenes are laid, has been for centuries immemorial the home of a curious and well-nigh distinct people, cherishing strange beliefs and singular customs, now for the most part obsolescent. [1)]

"A single stone" in the preface means "the unity of the whole island as a solid and single block of limestone four miles long" (179). In the novel, Jocelyn's father is one of the "small stone-merchants" (194) in "the stone island" (188). The Pierstons, the Caros, and the Bencombs have been dealing with stone in the isle since long ago.

In accordance with the island custom, the folks of the island should not be married to "kimberlines" who are from the mainland [2)], and at the same time consanguineous marriage should be approved. Brand in *Observations on Popular Antiquities* notes about traditional

marriage in Portland:

> There was a remarkable kind of marriage contract among the ancient Danes called *hand-festing* [3] .... Strong traces of this [custom] remain in our villages in many parts of the Kingdom. I have been more than once assured from credible authority on Portland Island, that something very like it is still practised there generally, where the inhabitants seldom or never intermarry with any on the main-land.... (Brand 87)

As the Preface of *The Well-Beloved* says, the marriage custom "hand-festing" has been kept by the islanders of Slingers. As for the marriage custom there, a man examines through premarital sexual intercourse whether a woman is healthy and can bear a baby, which is the prerequisite to a betrothal between the two of them. That is, "hand-festing" in the Isle is a symptom of a male-dominated society of remote antiquity.

Unlike on the mainland, "Pagan customs lingered yet, Christianity had established itself precariously at best" (186) in the Isle. That description of paganism on the island was added in the revised version in 1897, which concequently allows *The Well-Beloved* to emphasize that the Isle of Slingers is far removed from the mainland England in religion and custom. Premarital intercourses in Hardy's realist novels such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) were severely criticized by the Victorian readership. That saves the work from total refusal which *Tess* and *Jude* suffered.

2. The Man of Twenty, Avice the First, and Marcia

In Part First of the novel, Jocelyn is a twenty-year-old artist, "the sculptor of budding fame" (181). Avice the First is intelligent for an islander, and moreover her appearance attracts him: "Her intelligent eyes, her broad forehead, her thoughtful carriage, ensured one thing, that of all the girls he had known he had never met one with more charming and solid qualities than Avice Caro's" (185). He is surprised that the girl whom he has known from their early years has almost grown into a woman.

Avice the First does not realize her own female sexuality until the re-encounter with Jocelyn. He and Avice the First encounter for the first time in three years and eight months. She kisses him without any hesitation the way she used to. His hesitation in contrast makes her aware of herself as a marriageable woman and of the difference between her position and his—now that he is "the sculptor of budding fame" in London (181) but she is only an island girl. The awkwardness at that time between the couple leads her to develop her personality to one mature woman.

On the other hand, Jocelyn by all means pursues the "Well-Beloved" or "Love":

> ... to tell the truth, his affection for her was rather that of a friend than of a lover, and he

> felt by no means sure that the migratory, elusive idealization he called his Love who, ever since his boyhood, had flitted from human shell to human shell an indefinite number of times, was going to take up her abode in the body of Avice Caro. (182)
>
> To his Well-Beloved he had always been faithful; but she had had many embodiments. Each individuality known as Lucy, Jane, Flora, Evangeline, or what-not, had been merely a transient condition of her. He did not recognize this as an excuse or as a defence, but as a fact simply. Essentially she was perhaps of no tangible substance; a spirit, a dream, a frenzy, a conception, an aroma, an epitomized sex, a light of the eye, a parting of the lips. God only knew what she really was; Pierston did not. She was indescribable. (184)

Miller notes that the novel has "the theme of... a narcissistic loving of oneself in the beloved" (*Fiction* 148), and analyses the influence of Shelley's "The Revolt of the Islam" and "Epipsychidion." Jocelyn is attracted to a woman in whom "Well-Beloved" or "Love" is temporarily living, and therefore he asks Avice the First in whom he now sees the "Well-Beloved," "Will you have me as your husband?" (183).

According to the custom of the island, the folks must have premarital intercourse and then get married in church. Jocelyn puts off returning to London, and suggests her going for a walk to Henry the Eighth's Castle at night. However, Jocelyn, who thinks the custom old-fashioned, seems to have no intention to conduct premarital intercourse with Avice the First that night.

The relationship between Jocelyn and Avice the First breaks down after the night, because he realizes her deep-seated "old-fashioned idea" of the island despite her outward air of modernization:

> ... underneath the veneer of Avice's education many an old-fashioned idea lay slumbering, and he wondered if, in her natural melancholy at his leaving, she regretted the changing manners which made unpopular the formal ratification of a betrothal, according to the precedent of their sires and grandsires. (187)

Considering her education, though Avice the First is educated on the island, Jocelyn "observes" her notion not in the insular style:

> He observed that every aim of those who had brought her up had been to get her away mentally as far as possible from her natural and individual life as an inhabitant of a peculiar island: to make her an exact copy of tens of thousands of other people, in whose circumstances there was nothing special, distinctive, or picturesque; to teach her to forget all the experiences of her ancestors.... (186)

In her mind, her "modern feelings" are still mingled with "many an old-fashioned idea." Her mentality is a mixture of "modern feelings," whose means feelings not in the Isle of Slingers style,

and traditional idea, so it is similar to the condition of the Isle of Slingers itself. On the island a railway is under construction from the mainland, which symbolically tells a surge of modernization of the island with ancient customs and paganism. Avice Caro an island girl embraces the same dichotomy in her mentality as in her own country.

Avice does not come for the walk with Jocelyn at night, that is, she makes a decision not to have premarital intercourse with him. Education not in the insular style enables her to show her self-assertion. The reason for her refusal is in fact her old-fashioned nature as well as her hesitation to accept female sexuality which she just begins to realize herself. A boy gives a letter of apology from her to Jocelyn at that night; it says, "I am sure that this decision will not disturb you much; that you will understand my modern feelings, and think no worse of me for them" (189). Just as Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* is a woman so sensitive on female sexuality and sexual intercourse, Avice the First also rejects sexual relationships with Jocelyn for her seeming "modern feelings." Not merely Sue in *Jude* but also Avice in *The Well-Beloved* makes use of such "modernized" thoughts in order to avoid sexual relationship with a man.

Furthermore, Avice's letter shows the influence of Christianity from the mainland upon the pagan island: "I do not think it [carrying out an island custom] good, even where there is property, as in your case, to justify it, in a measure. I would rather trust in Providence" (189). Her letter continues: "... therefore it is best that I should not come—if only for appearances—and meet you at a time and place suggesting the custom, to others than ourselves, at least, if known" (189). The words convey her hesitation towards sexual relationship with him. Besides, here lies her conservative Christian morality represented in the Victorian period, instead of the notion of the betrothal custom on the pagan island Slingers. Jocelyn just regards her as obsessed with "old-fashioned idea," without understanding her real self.

On his way back to the mainland, Jocelyn meets Marcia Bencomb, who, scolded by her father, abandons her wealthy family, and is going to London alone at night. He is instantly fascinated as he gets "glimpses of her profile against the roadstead lights. It was dignified, arresting, that of a very Juno" (190). Here Jocelyn feels the transition of the "Well-Beloved" from Avice the First to Marcia whom he met just a moment ago:

> Somewhere about this time—it might have been sooner, it might have been later—he became conscious of a sensation which, in its incipient and unrecognized form, had lurked within him from some unnoticed moment when he was sitting close to his new friend under the lerret. Though a young man, he was too old a hand not to know what this was, and felt alarmed—even dismayed. It meant a possible migration of the Well-Beloved. (195)

As Jocelyn also tells his friend Somers "I am under a curious curse, or influence" (199), he is

incapable of abandoning "pursuit of the Well-Beloved." No sooner does he arrive at the mainland, than he prepares the marriage to Marcia. However, their relationship breaks down, because their farthers have been business rivals and Marcia's father is resolutely opposed to her marriage with a Pierston. In the meanwhile Avice Caro marries her cousin in the Isle of Slingers—a man of Jocelyn's kin—and Marcia leaves England with her family to travel around the world.

Taking into consideration that the railway is under construction from the mainland, *The Well-Beloved* is set in about 1850s.[4] Even though Avice and Marcia are on the isolated isle far from England, it is inevitable that they are influenced by the surge of the Victorian values. Both Avice and Marcia have their own idea and try to demonstrate their own will in the age when it is believed to be desirable that women should be 'virtuous' and obedient to men. However, after all, the two women are not free from the island custom and patriarchy. On the other hand, as the young man of twenty is always dreaming of his "Well-Beloved," Jocelyn just idealizes a female without really facing her and fails to obtain his "Well-Beloved."

3. The Man of Forty, and Avice the Second

Jocelyn of forty pursues his ideal "Well-Beloved" as well as his artistic estimation, and becomes a member of Royal Academy. Now twenty years have passed since he fell in love with Avice the First and Marcia Bencomb, and then he sees Ann Avice whom he calls Avice the Second. She is the very picture of her mother Avice the First, again in the Isle of Slingers.

Death sublimates Avice the First in the frame of the supreme "Well-Beloved." The letter from "the wife of one of his [Jocelyn's] father's former workmen" (228) tells Jocelyn in London of the death of Avice the First, which reminds him of her nature:

> He began to divine the truth. Avice, the departed one, though she had come short of inspiring a passion, had yet possessed a ground-quality absent from her rivals, without which it seemed that a fixed and full-rounded constancy to a woman could not flourish in him" (232).

The idealization of Avice the First out of the regret of his past is mixed with nostalgia for the Isle, which drives him to go back to Slingers. He is destined to see Avice the Second there.

However, the Second is quite different from her mother, except in their appearances. Unlike Avice the First, she is not educated and does not devote herself to one lover. Women in the Victorian period were supposed to conceal their affairs with men, but on the contraty Avice the Second reveals her prolific love affairs to Jocelyn: "... I get tired o' my lovers as soon as I get to know them well (253)." The reason for that is also told by her: "What I see in one young man for a while soon leaves him and goes into another yonder, and I follow, and then what I admire fades

out of him and springs up somewhere else; and so I follow on, and never fix to one (253)." The quality of her love is the very mirror-image of Pierston's, and as for her she has "loved *fifteen* a'ready! (253)." In spite of her past life, "She added anxiously, 'You won't tell anybody o' this in me, will you, sir? Because if it were known I am afraid no man would like me (254)."

Jocelyn is not disappointed but surprised at her view of love, the "Well-Beloved" in her still tantalizing him. Her attitude towards men is also analogous to Arabella in *Jude the Obscure*, though Avice the Second has less physical attractiveness than Arabella; the two women lack sophistication, utilize their own femininity, and share pragmatism in their own lives. Jocelyn, unlike Jude, tries to obtain Avice the Second covered with the phantom of Avice the First, or the "Well-Beloved."

His idealization or spiritualization of Avice the Second reflects "the epitome" of a female:

> ... for the moment an irradiated being, the epitome of a whole sex: by the beams of his own infatuation
>
> '..... robed in such exceeding glory
>
> That he beheld her not;' [5)]
>
> [Jocelyn] beheld her not as she really was, as she was even to himself sometimes. (256)

Jocelyn also regards her as "the Idea, in Platonic phraseology" (257), or "a sylph; Psyche" (261). "The idealizing passion" (260) conceals even Avice the Second's defects:

> It was true that as he studied her he saw defects in addition to her social insufficiencies. Judgment, hoodwinked as it was, told him that she was colder in nature, commoner in character, than that well-read, bright little woman Avice the First. But twenty years make a difference in ideals, and the added demands of middle-age in physical form are more than balanced by its concessions as to the spiritual content. (251)

Now that Avice the Second becomes an incarnation of the "Well-Beloved" / Avice the First, Jocelyn takes her to London, to live with her as a master and a housemaid and makes her sweep away his failures with his former "Well-Beloved":

> ... you can clear away plaster and clay messes in the studio, and chippings of stone, and help me in modelling, and dust all my Venus failures, and hands and heads and feet and bones, and other objects. (264)

His "Venus failures," added in the 1897 version, symbolize his former lovers whom the "Well-Beloved" has already left. Avice the Second reflecting the phantom now represents the supreme idealized woman, being entitled to clear them away by Jocelyn. As she diligently cleans them up, Jocelyn is more fascinated with her. Although they live in the same studio, there is still a distance between Jocelyn and Avice the Second.

Jocelyn does not know the fact that she has married until the end of their strange life in

London. In fact, when Jocelyn encountered her for the first time, she was already married to Isaac Pierston the island man, but the couple live separately. Jocelyn and Isaac are "undoubtedly scions of a common stock in this isle of intermarriages, though they had no proof of it" (278). She confesses to Jocelyn, "he [Isaac] courted me, and led me on island custom, and then I went to chapel one morning and married him in secret (274)," and she continues, "I was obliged to [marry him], after we'd proved each other (275)." They "proved each other" sexually according to the island's marriage custom. As Jocelyn comes to know her sexual experience with other males, the "Well-Beloved" fades away from Avice the Second. Therefore, Jocelyn changes his mind and wants to do something for Avice the First and Avice the Second, so that he can help Avice the Second to reunite with Isaac and to give birth to the renewed Avice—Avice the Third.

Ann Avice was originally named "Avice" in the serial version of the novel. Avice the Second, partly sharing the name with Avice the First through the revision, has two roles: to present the contrast with Avice the First in her attitude and understanding of female sexuality; and to give birth to Avice the Third. Twenty years have passed after Jocelyn's love with Avice the First. His aesthetic power has not diminished after the interval, whereas the emotion towards the "Well-Beloved" / Avice the First has been even strengthened. Thus he finds the "Well-Beloved" in Avice the Second at first sight. However, her female sexuality exposed by her marriage based on the island custom turns her idealized figure into a flesh-and-blood woman for Jocelyn. His idealization of Avice the Second in the wake of Avice the First ends with Avice the Second's disclosure of her premarital intercourse, marriage, and pregnancy of Avice the Third.

4. The Man Turned Sixty, Avice the Third, and Marcia

The final part of *The Well-Beloved* presents Jocelyn of sixty still abounding in love emotion and artistic power, in which part Jocelyn faces Avice the Third and tries to marry her. Avice the First is re-embodied in Avice the Third by the medium of Avice the Second. At the beginning of the part, Avice the Second calls him to the Isle and implies him to marry her daughter Avice the Third. For Jocelyn, the last Avice's figure is "the extraordinary reproduction of the original girl" (292) and "the renewed image" (292).

This third Avice is now a governess working at the castle. Her mother Avice the Second proudly tells of her intelligence, "Her education was very thorough—better even than her grandmother's" (289). Educational levels are varied in three Avices. Avice the First, brought up "to get her away mentally as far as possible from her natural and individual life as an inhabitant of a peculiar island" (186) and taught "to forget all the experiences of her ancestors" (186), is so sophisticated for an islander as to recite poetry on a platform. She knows the only love for

Jocelyn, while she hesitates to face her own sexuality and sexual intercourse with him. On the contrary, Avice the Second is not educated, though she is shrewd enough to utilize her femininity to make a living. Avice the Third, who has her independent thinking, is an intelligent governess and tries to control her emotions. To Jocelyn who begins to see her as a female with romantic and sexual attraction, her temperament of natural sensitiveness discloses itself in the shape of her mouth:

> Her rather nervous lips were thin and closed, so that they only appeared as a delicate red line. A changeable temperament was shown by that mouth—quick transitions from affection to aversion, from a pout to a smile. (289)

Avice the Third resembles the nervous Sue in *Jude the Obscure*, though to a less extent compared with her grandmother. She also shares intellectuality with Sue. Slender and tall Avice the Third is rather emotional than hysteric, unlike Sue. Avice the Third learned at Sandbourne of the mainland: she was living in England in 1890s, the late Victorian period, and she gets rid of the island values and customs representing "many an old-fashioned idea" (187).

Although this time Jocelyn does not grasp neither the nature of Avice the Third nor that of his sixty-year-old self, he desires the marriage with her. On the other hand, he begins to fear his old age, turning his reason for the marriage from "pursuit of the Well-Beloved" into compensation for her grandmother. In spite of his modern thought he has a side of a conventional man, so he tries to persuade Avice the Third by showing off his fame and wealth as a famous sculptor:

> ... he invited mother [Avice the Second] and daughter [Avice the Third] to spend a week or two with him, thinking thereby to exercise on the latter's imagination an influence which was not practicable while he was a guest at their house; and by interesting his betrothed in the fitting and furnishing of this residence to create in her an ambition to be its mistress. (308)

As Avice the Third is actually influenced by his circumstances as an artist in London, Jocelyn's aim seems to be somewhat fulfilled.

Islanders of Slingers still have strong attachiment to conventional matrimony. When it is rumored that Avice the Third and Jocelyn make an engagement, the island women envy her:

> Not a young woman on the island but was envying Avice at that moment; for Jocelyn was absurdly young for three score, a good-looking man, one whose history was generally known here; as also were the exact figures of the fortune he had inherited from his father, and the social standing he could claim—a standing, however, which that fortune would not have been large enough to procure unassisted by his reputation in his art. (315)

As we can see the heroine's mother's reaction in *Tess*, in *TheWell-Beloved* marriage with wealthy

men, is sought for by young women on the island, too. Like Joan in *Tess*, Avice the Second thinks that her daughter should be married with a well-off man, to be happy as a woman.

On the contrary, Avice the Third thinks of her own marriage differently from her mother. The prospect of marriage with Jocelyn arising, her peculiarity for a young insular woman presents itself in conversation between her and her mother. Avice the Second says to Avice the Third:

> "He [Jocelyn] is a man in society, and would take you [Avice the Third] to an elegant house in London suited to your education, instead of leaving you to mope here."
>
> "I should like that well enough," replied Avice carelessly.
>
> "Then give him some encouragement."
>
> "I don't care enough about him to do any encouraging. It is his business, I should think, to do all." (299)

Her grandmother wants to be loved by Jocelyn and her mother also manages to serve him as a housemaid, but Avice the Third does not hide her unwillingness to marry him. She is disappointed at his overwhelming old age, although there seem to be some other reasons for her reluctance. In fact, she has a lover named Henri Leverre who is Marcia's step-son, and Avice the Third escapes with him from the island leaving a letter behind addressed to her mother:

> I felt that, though I had intended to give him up, I could not now becomingly marry any other man, and that I ought to marry him. We decided to do it at once, before anybody could hinder us. (319)

She clearly expresses her feeling for Mr. Leverre, and never suppresses her wish to marry the man. Such attitudes towards love and marriage are unusual in the island with old tradition, because no one can exersise the authority of betrothal except male folks of the Isle. That is, insular females generally have no rights to intervene in the betrothal practice constructed by the masculine Slingers society. Her self-assertion is stronger than the other Avices. This shift reflects the change of historical background in the forty years during the Victorian period, from 1850s to 1890s. Taking into consideration her education in Sandbourne of the mainland, it is natural that she should be influencd by the then values of England. She is the only one to get over the limitations of the island custom and patriarchy, which Avice the First and the Second are not able to.

As for Jocelyn Pierston, he changes himself into a different man with a new idea through his relationships with three Avices from his twenties to sixties. His loss of the "Well-Beloved" Avice the Third, the "Well-Beloved" and the disease from his old age and fatigue critically alter his artistic sense and love:

> The artistic sense had left him, and he could no longer attach a definite sentiment to images of beauty recalled from the past. His appreciativeness was capable of exercising itself only on utilitarian matters, and recollection of Avice's good qualities alone had any

effect on his mind; of her appearance none at all. (330)

Concerning the relationship between Jocelyn's "pursuit of the Well-Beloved" and his aesthetic power, Deangelis maintains that "Jocelyn Pierston's search for the feminine ideal..., may reflect his pursuit of an idealized sense of self represented in his artistry" (405). It is certain that Jocelyn's abandonment of "pursuit of the Well-Beloved" coincides with the loss of his aesthetic sense. In addition to that, such loss also brings to him understanding of the essence in the real world.

In pursuing his idealized woman, he tries to get married to a woman whom the image inhabits. His desire to acquire the "Well-Beloved" and take her in marriage is grounded on not only male sexual desire for an idealized female but also on his hidden understanding and acceptance of the then marriage custom / system. He is also bound by marriage contract. Through his loss of Avice the Third and serious disease, however, Jocelyn comes to utilize the insular marriage custom for his marriage with Marcia from a different point of view.

When Marcia becomes a widowed mother of Avice the Third's lover Leverre, Jocelyn and Marcia re-encounter in the island in their sixties. She has more female attractiveness than any other women in the novel, and moreover her first marriage with Mr. Leverre makes her become "skilled in beautifying artifices" (331). Since her husband's death she still maintains her beauty by keeping up "the practice" (331) partly because she "found that it helped me [her] with men in bring up his [Leverre's] boy on small means" (331). She reveals herself to Jocelyn who has liberated himself from aestheticism, saying: "See if I am satisfactory now—to you who think beauty vain. The rest of me—and it is a good deal—lies on my dressing-table at home. I shall never put it on again—never!" (332). Although "she exposed the ruthless treatment to which she had subjected herself" (332), "she was a woman" (332).

The title of the last part of *The Well-Beloved*, "A Young Man Turned Sixty" suggests his mental and physical aging as well as his acquisition of cognitive ability to perceive the real world which shows he finally comes to perceive a female real self like sixty-year-old Marcia. At the last moment Jocelyn sees a flesh-and-blood woman without idealizing or spiritualizing her. As Avice the Second confesses "I was obliged to [marry him], after we'd proved each other (275)," the marriage custom in the Isle needs to "prove each other" before matrimony. The truth is, however, that a couple does not prove one another and that a man one-sidedly examines a woman under the name of official marriage. Jocelyn proves Marcia, not by having premarital sexual intercourse but by observing her figure which the "Well-Beloved" no longer inhabits.

Hardy added one sentence to the preface of *The Well-Beloved* included in Wessex Edition in 1912, whose words were not written in his former edition of Wessex Novels in 1987:

> As for the story itself, it may be worth while to remark that, differing from all or most others of the series in that the interest aimed at is of an ideal or subjective nature, and

> frankly imaginative, verisimilitude in the sequence of events has been subordinated to the said aim. (173-74)

Undoubtedly that the story is created with fantastic or anti-realistic framework, in which the hero loves the three women of the same lineage every twenty years and pursues the transient "Idea" till he becomes an old man. Jocelyn's attitude towards women as a dreaming man is more emphasized by the revision, as the author adds the proviso that "verisimilitude in the sequence of events has been subordinated" (174).

Futhermore, the rearrangement enables the story to hold characteristics of a realist novel. According to *Life*, Hardy seems to have already had a scheme of creating the story in 1889: "The story of a face which goes through three generations or more, would make a fine novel or poem of the passage of Time. The differences in personality to be ignored." (*Life* 223) In *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*, actually, one name is retained through the three generations of women. [6] However, by revision of the name of Avice the Second, "Ann Avice," "differences" are newly made and they are treated as individuals. Considering Watt indicates about conventions of realist novels (33), Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* is not merely "fantastic little tale" [7] but also a "realist" novel.

Jocelyn and Marcia are emancipated from their own spells, as he suggests to her "the island ruled our [Jocelyn's and Marcia's] destinies, though were not on it" (334). The story ends with the loveless but peaceful marriage between Jocelyn and Marcia according to the social circumstances in the Isle of Slingers, which denouement Hardy rewrote and added when he revised *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* to *The Well-Beloved*. The former edition presents Jocelyn and Marcia getting married hastily in their twenties, separating after their early several months, and never seeing each other till the very end of the story. In contrast to the serial version, at the end of *The Well-Beloved*, Marcia is still under the spell of the marrage custom rooted in the Isle, or rather utilizes it. After all she marries the man whom she had to give up in her twenties on account of the patriarchic constraint. As for Jocelyn, by seeing women as flesh-and-blood beings, the sculptor abandons not only his "pursuit of the Well-Beloved" but also his idealization of women.

Conclusion

Thomas Hardy brought out *The Well-Beloved* after revision of *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*. The novel has been regarded as one of his "minor" novels, and there are still few studies on female characterization in the text. Jocelyn's "pursuit of the Well-Beloved" connotes male idealization or spiritualization of female characters. As the sculptor grows old he grasps reality of flesh-and-blood women.

Every twenty years, Jocelyn develops and each Avice reflect female characteristics in the late

19th century England. Jocelyn's pursuit is taken partly as a way of aesthetic perception and power, and partly as male idealization of females. The young man of twenty cannot obtain the "Well-Beloved," only to idealize and imagine a female whom the phantom named "the Well-Beloved" inhabits without seeing the real self of Avice the First. She cannot surmount the obstacles of the island custom at that time, because her mentality is a mixture of "modern feelings" and her innate conservative idea. During the next twenty years Jocelyn's aestheticism has not been lessened yet the emotion towards the "Well-Beloved" / Avice the First has been strengthened. His idealization of Avice the Second continuing from the First ends with Avice the Second's premarital intercourse, marriage, and pregnancy of Avice the Third. Avice the Second fulfills the duties of making contrast between her mother Avice the First and herself in respect of female sexuality and of bearing her daughter Avice the Third. After the lapse of the last twenty years, Jocelyn abandons not only his pursuit of the "Well-Beloved" but also his idealization of women. The third Avice gets over the barrier that separates love and traditional marriage that her grandmother could not overcome. Finally Jocelyn proposes the island custom to Marcia in his own way, and the man who pursued "the Well-Beloved" lives together with his ex-lover under the name of marriage. The man turned sixty obtains clear vision of women.

The Well-Beloved created between *Tess* and *Jude* portrays the process of development of a male view of a female through a sketch of one artist's temperament on "a fantasy island." Although the work has been regarded as a "fantasy" or an "anti-realism" novel, it is clear that the four women's lives through Jocelyn's eyes suggest that *The Well-Beloved* also shares characteristics of realist works by Thomas Hardy, in spite of the fantastic setting. In the novel of the imaginary island, which represents a patriarchic social structure of the later 19th century England, the author delineates the process of evolution and adaptation by the four women—three Avices spreading over three generations and Marcia.

Notes

1) Thomas Hardy, *The Well-Beloved*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 173. Subsequent references to this edition appear parenthetically in the text.

2) Foreigners, who are not born in the isle and "strangers from the mainland of Wessex," have been called "kimberlins" in the Isle of Slingers (*The Well-Beloved* 187).

3) "Hand-festing" in Brand's report is "hand-fasting" in English whose meaning is "betrothal."

4) Since the early 19th century railways had been constructed in Portland from England, and Weymouth and Portland railway was completed in the early 1860s. Part 1 of *The Well-Beloved* shows a setting of an inn at which Jocelyn and Marcia decided to stay at their first night:

> The houses facing the bay now sheltered them completely, and they reached the vicinity of the new

railway terminus (which the station was at this date) without difficulty. (195)

The opening scene of the next chapter begins with the following description: "Miss Bencomb was leaving the hotel for the railway, which quite near at hand, and had only recently been opened..." (197).

5） The lines are quoted from Shelley's *Epipsychidion* (lines 199-200), which refer to the image of Beauty for which a man pursuing in women (*The Well-Beloved*, "Notes" 347). On the cover of the novel Hardy writes "one shape of many names" from Shelley. Miller investigates the influence of Shelley in *The Well-Beloved*: "*The Well-Beloved* is so much under the aegis of Shelley that it might be defined as a parody of him, or as an interpretation of his work, or as a subterranean battle to combat his influence" (*Fiction* 148).

6） When Jocelyn encounters Avice the Second for the first time, according to the revised version, he says to her, "your name is not the same as your mother's!" (237), whereas he says "your name is the same as your mother's!" (67) in the former edition. Jocelyn of the revised version continues with saying "Well. Ann or otherwise, you are Avice to me" (237).

7） Hardy wrote to Swinburne in 1897, in which he referred to *The Well-Beloved* as "fantastic little tale" (295).

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